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Friends Society of

*Reasons why Friends do not Illuminate their
Houses at the Time of public Rejoicing,
nor shut their Shops for the public Fasts,
Feasts and Thanksgivings.*

A

REPRESENTATION

ON BEHALF OF THE

PEOPLE called QUAKERS,

TO THE

President and Executive Council,

AND THE

General Assembly of Pennsylvania, &c.

D U B L I N :

Reprinted by ROBERT JACKSON, Meath-street.

MDCCCLXXXII.



Philadelphia, 6th of 12th Month, 1781.

On the 26th Ult. a Committee of six Friends, by appointment, waited on the President of the Executive Council, and the Speaker of the General Assembly, with Copies of the following Representation, to request the favour of them to lay the same before each of the Publick Bodies at which they respectively presided; which they obligingly undertook, and it is now printed for the use of the Members of our own Society, and the information of others who are unacquainted with our religious principles.



To the PRESIDENT and EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, the GENERAL ASSEMBLY of PENNSYLVANIA, and others whom it may concern.

The following Representation on Behalf of the People called QUAKERS,

S H E W E T H,

THAT the outrages and violences committed on the property, and on divers of the persons of the inhabitants of Philadelphia, of our religious society, by companies of licentious people parading the streets, destroying the windows and doors of our houses, breaking into and plundering some of them, on the evening of the 24th of last month, encreases the occasion of our present address to you who

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are in the exercise of the powers of civil government, which is in itself honourable and originally instituted for the support of publick peace and good order, and the preservation of the just rights of the people.

Although we believe that most of you are not unacquainted with our religious principles in general, and the reasons of our dissent from other professed Christians, in divers matters relating to faith and practice; yet as such riotous proceedings are shameful to the Christian name, and dishonourable to government, and many of us have suffered great loss and damage, we apprehend it our duty to bring into your view the grounds of our not complying with the vain modes of rejoicing, in which many indulge themselves; as also for the information of others, who through misapprehension or prejudice, too freely attribute our conduct to obstinacy and a party spirit, and are thus prompted wrongfully to judge and condemn us.

It therefore appears to us requisite to put you and them in mind, that at the beginning of the reformation, a few centuries past, the day of the Lord gradually broke forth in divers nations of Europe, raising up pious men to declare against the
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gross superstitions and impositions, contrary to the nature and spirit of Christianity, which for many ages had prevailed, and enabling them to stand faithful, many of them even unto death, according to the discoveries of duty made known to them, in that revival of gospel dawn on their minds. And in process of time it pleased Almighty God further to cause his glorious day of light to advance, and the Sun of Righteousness to shine in great brightness, whereby not only the gross, but also the more specious as well as minute, branches of corruption were manifested to our worthy ancestors: which divine principle of light and truth we also profess.

In this manifestation of gospel light they clearly saw, and many of us are now also firmly convinced, among other important truths, that the lusts of ambition, avarice, envy, and emulation, from whence wars, strife, and contention about earthly things proceed, are the fruits of the depravity and corruption of the human heart, which must be expelled and eradicated in the spiritual work of Christian redemption; and they not only saw that they must cease from outward hostilities, but that their conversation and conduct must be consistent with

the doctrine and precepts of the gospel; that as they could not join with others in shedding the blood of their fellow-men, for whom Christ died, " who came " to save mens lives, and not to destroy " them;" neither could they unite in rejoicing for the advantages gained by such bloodshed. As they could not fight with the fighters, neither could they triumph with the conquerors; and therefore they were not to be prevailed upon to make a shew of conformity in such rejoicings, by placing lights in any part of the fronts of their houses, or other compliances of the like nature and tendency; well knowing the levity and folly attending such things to be inconsistent with religious gravity and sobriety, and with that godly fear and reverence, which ought at all times to dwell on the minds of those who profess to be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It was likewise shewed to them in the same divine light, as well as by the doctrine of the holy scriptures, that the Sons of God were led by the spirit of God, and that all voluntary humility and will-worship must be laid aside by them; and therefore they could not subject themselves in the worship of Almighty God to the will

will and commands of men; and, as they were redeemed from insincerity, they could not dissemble by seeming to conform, when in heart and spirit they did not; and therefore continued to open their shops, and follow their lawful occupations on days appointed by human authority for the observation of publick fasts, feasts, and thanksgivings, as usual on other days. This was their constant conscientious practice, that they might stand clear in the discharge of their duty towards God; and with intent that others, through their example, might be induced to reflect upon the vanity and impropriety of those observances and tumults, and their incoherence with the inward life, spirit, and virtue of true religion and Christian sobriety.

And notwithstanding they were charged with being actuated by a spirit of singularity, obstinacy, and a desire to be contrary to others, yet they demonstrated, that in whatsoever they could comply, agreeable to good conscience, they were ready to do it. Thus they concurred with the propriety and decency of other professed Christians, in appropriating the first day of the week for the performance of publick worship; believing it also to be their duty

duty to suspend their attention to their outward concerns on other days, and to meet often together, according to the practice of the primitive Christians, for the like pious purposes.

It is not from imitation, or for the support of ancient custom, but from a conviction of judgment, that we are led to the same practice with our ancestors; being firmly persuaded that the holy spirit will in like manner lead and guide such who are faithful to its dictates, in their conduct and conversation among men, and especially in matters of faith and worship: and therefore we can neither really worship, nor put on any part of the appearance thereof, merely in conformity to the injunctions of human authority; believing it our duty rather to shew our neighbours by our practice, that in this gospel day the holy spirit hath led us out of the formality of publick fasts, which though in practice under the Jewish dispensation, it does not appear that they are enjoined on Christians, either by precept or example from the New Testament: Christ himself in his spiritual appearance, being the teacher of his people, and when he leads them to fast, he directs that it be in private, and that they appear not unto men to fast,

fast.* This we believe to be our duty as a people, to bear constant and open testimony unto, and also to maintain it fully, and not in part only ; lest by falling short therein, we should deny Christ our Lord before men, whom we ought to acknowledge before all, and who hath said, " Whosoever shall deny me before men, " him will I also deny before my Father " which is in heaven."

Our forefathers, under full conviction of the rectitude of their principles, and uprightness of their intentions, of which they had given indubitable proofs, through a long series of severe persecution in their native land, borne with much firmness and Christian patience, became at length intrusted with, and entitled to, many valuable extensive rights and privileges ; which induced them, at their own expence, to encounter the dangers of the seas, and many other hazards and difficulties, to settle and improve this country, at that time a wilderness ; having first, in concert with their much beloved friend, the wise William Penn, formed such a constitution of government, as gave the most promising prospect of securing to themselves, and their posterity, the free and full enjoyment

* Mat. vi. 16, 17, 18.

of liberty of conscience ; which they preferred to all temporal considerations, and were constantly careful to preserve not only to themselves, but to all persons of every other religious denomination, who dwelt among them : and for a considerable number of years the administration of the laws was chiefly committed to men of the same liberal principles ; that by the Divine blessing on their pious concern for the present and future prosperity and happiness of the people, piety and virtue were promoted and encouraged, vice and irreligion were discountenanced, peace, harmony, and concord prevailed, and the enjoyment of religious and civil liberty was inviolably preserved. Thus Pennsylvania became celebrated for the mildness and liberal temper of its government, and great numbers of sober persons of tender consciences, of different religious professions, found a quiet retreat from the oppressions, and persecution to which they had been subjected in various parts of Europe.

It must therefore appear strange and extraordinary, in the view of candid enquirers, that so evident a change and contrast have taken place ; and that we, many of whom are the descendants of the first settlers, professing the same religious principles,

ciples, and connected in interest, affection, and duty, to the real good and welfare of our country, who have never forfeited our birth-right, should now be vilified, persecuted, imprisoned, and excluded from our just liberties and privileges, not only by laws which have been calculated to oppress us, and the execution of them, in some places, committed to men of avaricious, profligate principles, who have made a prey of the innocent and industrious, to the great loss and damage of some, and the almost ruin of others; but scurrilous publications, and other invidious means used by our adversaries, to calumniate and reproach us with opprobrious names, in order to inflame the minds of the ignorant, and impose on the credulous to our prejudice; when, upon an impartial, candid examination, we trust it will appear, that in the course of the commotions which have unhappily prevailed, no just cause of offence will be found against us in the general, but that we have endeavoured to maintain our peaceable religious principles, to preserve a good conscience towards God, and to manifest our good will to all men.

We are not incited by party views or vindictive motives, in this Representation,
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but to awaken your cool and dispassionate attention to our multiplied sufferings, and the abuses we have received; knowing that magistracy is intended for a terror to evil doers, and an encouragement to the virtuous: but where the necessary care and exertions are not used for the prevention and suppression of profanity, tumults and outrage, and a virtuous part of the community are oppressed and insulted, the true end of government is neglected, and anarchy, confusion, contempt of authority, and insecurity to persons and property will succeed; and although publick fasts may be proclaimed, and days under the name of humiliation recommended and appointed, and confession of sin and transgression verbally made, yet, unless there be a true and sincere fasting from ambition, strife, ill-will, animosities, infidelity, fraud, luxury, revelling, drunkenness, oppression, and all manner of evil, it cannot be a fast, or acceptable day to the Lord; nor can we have a well grounded hope, that the scourge with which the inhabitants have been visited, will be removed, and days of peace and tranquility restored.

The dispensation of war, bloodshed, and calamity which hath been permitted to prevail on this continent is very solemn
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and awful; demanding the most serious and heartfelt attention of all ranks and denominations among the people, individually to consider and examine, how far we are each of us really and sincerely engaged to bring forth fruits of true repentance and amendment of life, agreeable to the spirit and doctrine of the gospel. And although we have been exposed to great abuse and unchristian treatment, we wish to be enabled, through the assistance of divine grace, to cherish in ourselves, and inculcate in others with whom we have an influence, that disposition of forgiveness of injuries, enjoined by the precepts and example of Christ our holy Lawgiver; and to manifest our desires and endeavours to promote the real good of our country, and that we are

Your Friends.

Signed in and on behalf of a meeting of the Representatives of the said people, held at Philadelphia the 22d day of the 11th month, 1781.

JOHN DRINKER, Clerk,

Yours Friends,

JOHN DRINKER, Clerk.

